Table 3-6 The Genetic Code

First Position	Second Position: U	Second Position: C	Second Position: A	Second Position: G	Third Position
U	UUU Phe	UCU Ser	UAU Tyr	UGU Cys	U
	UUC Phe	UCC Ser	UAC Tyr	UGC Cys	C
	UUA Leu	UCA Ser	UAA *Stop*	UGA *Stop*	A
	UUG Leu	UCG Ser	UAG *Stop*	UGG Trp	G
C	CUU Leu	CCU Pro	CAU His	CGU Arg	U
	CUC Leu	CCC Pro	CAC His	CGC Arg	C
	CUA Leu	CCA Pro	CAA Gln	CGA Arg	A
	CUG Leu	CCG Pro	CAG Gln	CGG Arg	G
A	AUU Ile	ACU Thr	AAU Asn	AGU Ser	U
	AUC Ile	ACC Thr	AAC Asn	AGC Ser	C
	AUA Ile	ACA Thr	AAA Lys	AGA Arg	A
	AUG Met	ACG Thr	AAG Lys	AGG Arg	G
G	GUU Val	GCU Ala	GAU Asp	GGU Gly	U
	GUC Val	GCC Ala	GAC Asp	GGC Gly	C
	GUA Val	GCA Ala	GAA Glu	GGA Gly	A
	GUG Val	GCG Ala	GAG Glu	GGG Gly	G

Health in Bethesda, Maryland, observed, also in 1961, that the addition of the synthetic polynucleotide poly U (UUUUU . . .) to a cell-free system capable of making proteins leads to the synthesis of polypeptide chains containing only the amino acid phenylalanine. The nucleotide groups UUU thus must specify phenylalanine. Use of increasingly more complex, defined polynucleotides as synthetic messenger RNAs rapidly led to the identification of more and more codons. Particularly important in completing the code was the use of polynucleotides like AGUAGU, put together by the Indian organic chemist H. G. Khorana, then working in Madison, Wisconsin. Completion of the code in 1966 revealed that 61 out of the 64 possible permuted groups corresponded to amino acids, with most amino acids being coded by more than one nucleotide triplet (Table 3-6).

Start and Stop Signals Are Also Encoded Within DNA[56–59]

Initially, it was guessed that translation of an mRNA molecule would commence at one end and finish when the entire mRNA message had been read into amino acid sequences. But, in fact, translation both starts and stops at internal positions. Thus, signals must be present within DNA (and its mRNA products) to initiate and terminate translation. First to be worked out were the stop signals. Three separate codons (UAA, UAG, and UGA), first known as **nonsense codons**, do not correspond to any amino acids but instead serve as chain-termi-